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Viewing cable 08QUITO297, SFRC STAFFDEL CARL MEACHAM VISIT TO QUITO

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Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#08QUITO297**.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
08QUITO297	2008-03-28 10:22	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy Quito

Appears in these articles:

<http://www.eluniverso.com/2011/04/11/1/1355/cable-147622.html>

VZCZCXYZ0018
OO RUEHWEB

DE RUEHQT #0297/01 0881022
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 281022Z MAR 08
FM AMEMBASSY QUITO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8682
INFO RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA 7464
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 3876
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 2962
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ MAR LIMA 2507
RUEHGL/AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL 3441
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RHMFISS/CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL

C O N F I D E N T I A L QUITO 000297

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: TEN YEARS
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [MARR](#) [EC](#) [CO](#) [VE](#)
SUBJECT: SFRC STAFFDEL CARL MEACHAM VISIT TO QUITO

Classified By: CDA Douglas Griffiths for Reasons 1.4 (b&d).

1...

id: 147622
date: 3/28/2008 10:22
refid: 08QUITO297
origin: Embassy Quito
classification: CONFIDENTIAL
destination:
header:
VZCZCXYZ0018
OO RUEHWEB

DE RUEHQT #0297/01 0881022
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 281022Z MAR 08
FM AMEMBASSY QUITO
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----- header ends -----

C O N F I D E N T I A L QUITO 000297

SIPDIS

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¶1. (SBU) Summary. Senior Professional Staff Member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Carl Meacham, during a visit to Quito on March 19, focused on the March 1 attack on a FARC camp in Ecuador and on Ecuador-Colombia relations. Meacham met separately with officials of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Government and Police, and Defense, and held a roundtable discussion with non-governmental analysts. The Ecuadorian interlocutors stressed that the Colombian incursion was a violation of Ecuadorian sovereignty, that the FARC were not welcome but that the border is impossible to control, and that Colombian-Ecuadorian relations would improve only with Colombian commitment never to repeat such an attack. GOE and non-governmental opinions differed on the GOE's commitment against the FARC. (End Summary)

Opposition to "Preventive War"

¶2. (SBU) All of Meacham's interlocutors (in and out of government) agreed that the Colombian attack was premeditated and an unacceptable violation of Ecuadorian sovereignty. MFA Under Secretary for Bilateral Affairs Diego Stacey stated that the GOE was against the concept of "preventive war", and that it was not an acceptable justification for Colombia's attack against the FARC within Ecuadorian territory.

Zero Tolerance for "Irregular Forces", but Unable to Prevent Incursions

¶3. (C) Ministry of Defense Principal Under Secretary Carvajal said that the GOE had a policy of zero tolerance of "irregular" or illegal forces in Ecuador, and gave a detailed description of the logistical challenges and degree of effort by Ecuador and Colombia. He noted that, unlike Colombia, Ecuador had cities close to the Colombian border, including Quito (which is roughly the same distance from the border as

Pasto, Colombia). He said that Colombian military control along the border was sporadic, using mobile patrols from their few posts near the border, while the Ecuadorian military had 14 military posts in its border region, covering the region more consistently. Minister of Coordination of Internal and External Security Fernando Bustamante stressed that the Ecuadorian military had destroyed 47 FARC camps since 2007, and that the GOE fought narcotics trafficking diligently. He also reiterated an earlier statement by the Minister of Defense that the GOE calling the FARC terrorists would make Ecuador a target for FARC reprisals.

14. (SBU) Under Secretary of Defense General Jorge Pena said that the problems along the border could not be solved by the military alone, pointing out that FARC members in civilian clothes who presented identification could legally cross the border. He added that he considered FARC actions terrorism, and that he was glad to see Reyes dead. Referring to Plan Ecuador, Minister Bustamante discussed the GOE's desire to increase its presence in the border area using social and economic programs and police presence, with the objective of reducing incentives for Ecuadorians to work with irregular forces. Under Secretary Carvajal said that Ecuadorians living in the border region claimed they made \$3,000 each working in coca fields in Colombia, but that they would not plant coca within Ecuador because they considered it prohibited here. Under Secretary Stacey said that the GOE currently spent approximately \$6 million annually on border protection.

Ecuador-Colombia Relations Will Mend, but Only Under Certain Conditions

15. (C) Under Secretary Stacey stated that relations with Colombia would be normalized, that the two countries had many common project and interests, and that the GOE wanted to work with Colombia. He stressed, however, the GOE wanted "guarantees that this (a cross border military incursion) would not happen again." Minister Bustamante claimed that the GOE never once received satisfactory results through the Binational Border Commission (COMBIFRON) with Colombia. He said the GOE sought compensation for properties that were destroyed and impartial investigations when Ecuadorians were killed, but with no result. He stressed that given the failure of bilateral mechanisms, observers representing a third party (such as the Rio Group and OAS) were needed to ensure the rule of law.

U.S.-Ecuador Relations

16. (C) Under Secretary Carvajal said that the GOE had lost political confidence in the U.S. because of accusations by the U.S. of GOE collaboration with the FARC. In contrast, Under Secretary Pena said that the Ecuadorian military had good relations with the U.S., and that it infuriated him to hear Ecuador being compared to Venezuela. Meacham asked each of his government interlocutors what U.S. support would be useful. Minister Bustamante stressed that Ecuador would welcome economic, social and police assistance more than military assistance. Asked about military needs, Carvajal expressed reluctance to depend on the U.S., but after Carvajal left the meeting, General Pena sounded receptive to U.S. assistance.

Analysts' Views

17. (C) Political analyst Cesar Montufar said that the USG's comments in support of Colombia were interpreted in Ecuador as directed against Ecuador, resulting in "polarization, with Venezuela and Ecuador on one side and the U.S. and Colombia on the other." Montufar told Meacham that this political polarization had "allowed the more radical elements in the GOE to have a larger voice, which prompted the President's more radical posture." Military analyst Berta Garcia added that anti-American sentiment was a source of political capital in Ecuador, and emphasized that Ecuadorians were very protective of sovereignty. Franklin Barriga Lopez, Academic Director of the Ecuadorian Institute of International Relations Studies, commented that the presence of what he

termed "Cuban doctrinists" within the Ministry of Education had spread leftist ideas, that he believed radical elements within Ecuadorian society had launched verbal attacks on the Manta Forward Operating Location (FOL) due to its counter-drug success, and that political advisors from Venezuela had what he considered close access to the Correa administration.

Laptops and Investigations

18. (C) Minister Bustamante stressed that Ecuador would have confidence in the documents allegedly contained in Reyes' computers "only if they were analyzed by an impartial source and handled in a transparent manner, rather than for political ends as Colombia was doing." He further asserted that once the GOE had access to the computer documents, it would investigate.
Griffiths

=====CABLE ENDS=====